



PROCESS FOR THE PLAN UPDATE

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One of the major focuses of the update is the utilization of a robust public input process to ensure policy guidance is informed by community preferences. The process of developing and writing this Plan has been collaborative and inclusive of a wide range of stakeholders. The process began with the city listening to the opinions and comments of its residents. Next, the city organized a series of public forums to provide its residents an opportunity to consider the future of the City in light of local, regional and national trends. Finally, using the feedback provided by residents after the forums, the LUAC created the vision and goals outlined in this Plan.

City staff also worked with the Land Use Plan Task Force made up of three City Council members throughout the Plan update. The Task Force advised staff with a focus on the process, and also reviewed applications and provided recommendations to the Land Use Advisory Committee membership and co-chairs.

Stakeholder Interviews

The City began the Land Use Plan update with stakeholder interviews to help understand the issues that the Plan update would need to address. Between May and August of 2013, city staff and consultants facilitated group meetings with a range of stakeholders, residents and non-residents, with significant interest in the future of the City. Participants included the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council (MYAC), Planning and Zoning Commission, Homeowner Association representatives, stakeholders from the development community, representatives from the local schools (Fort Bend ISD, Lamar CISD, University of Houston – Sugar Land), a group of young professionals working for the City's largest employers, and representatives from local companies. Stakeholder meetings help determine the significant land use related topics that required further investigation through the Land Use Plan update.



During the meetings, stakeholders were asked to identify five aspects of the city they wanted to see remain the same, and five aspects that they wanted to see change. Facilitators also asked a series of land use related questions of stakeholders, for example: Imagine yourself five to ten years from now; what would you be looking for in a place to live? Are there activities or experiences that are unavailable in the City that you do elsewhere, but that you wish were available here?

Staff and consultants also met one-on-one with the members of city council to seek input on the same series of questions asked of the stakeholder groups.

The responses received during these stakeholder meetings helped define the topics that would be the focus of the Land Use Forum speaker series. Input received during the meetings also informed the vision and goals drafted for the Plan.

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Land Use Advisory Committee

The City Council created a citizen advisory group, the Land Use Advisory Committee (LUAC), to guide the Plan creation. Members of the Committee included citizens from a variety of viewpoints, including residents living in neighborhoods across the City, ages ranging from young single adults to empty nesters, and a diversity of ethnicities. City Council adopted Resolution 13-34 which appointed the Committee after receiving a recommendation from the City Council Task Force. The LUAC met throughout the Plan development to provide recommendations for goals, policies and other Plan components, and provide ongoing community input into the Plan.



City Council formally created the Land Use Advisory Committee with the passage of Resolution 13-34 on August 6, 2013 and charged the Committee with the following five items:

- To investigate and consider the variety of issues, including demographic trends, economic development, and mobility, that influence successful land use outcomes;
- To participate in a community dialogue and education process regarding land use issues by attending the proposed “Land Use Forum” public roundtable discussion series;
- To participate in the development of Project recommendations by considering how community values should influence land use policy;
- To complete participation in the Project by making recommendations to forward to City Council for consideration;
- To continue to serve as advocates for the Project within the community while it is ongoing.

From the summer of 2013 through the summer of 2015 the original Land Use Advisory Committee met a total of ten times to provide direction on the Plan’s development. After two years of work on the Plan, several vacancies were created on the LUAC. As a result, City Council appointed six new members to the Land Use Advisory Committee in early 2016. The LUAC spent the rest of 2016 and all of 2017 revising the draft goals and policies, and developing the action items, Future Land Use Map, as well as other components of the Plan. In total, the LUAC met more than 30 times throughout the four year process.

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Land Use Forum

One of the most unique components of the Land Use Plan update was the City-hosted Land Use Forum in 2014. The Forum was a six-part speaker series and community roundtable which featured leading experts from both regional and national perspectives and focused on important land use topics and issues to consider for the long-term success of Sugar Land. Through this series, the goal was for all participants to gain an understanding of the long-term implications of land use decisions and successful planning practices, and have the opportunity to share what's important for Sugar Land's future.

The Land Use Forum was open to the public and heavily publicized to gain as much participation as possible. Each Land Use Forum session began with presentations by the invited speakers followed by an activity and community dialogue designed to solicit feedback from the public. Over the 3-month series, nearly 200 people attended and participated in the Land Use Forum. Social media outlets including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Pinterest were used extensively as tools to communicate and gain feedback from citizens during live broadcasts and after each forum by posing thought-provoking questions to elicit responses and productive feedback and concerns. The feedback provided guidance to the Land Use Plan update.



CITY OF SUGAR LAND

LAND USE FORUM

**PARTICIPATE IN A PUBLIC FORUM
TO SHAPE SUGAR LAND'S FUTURE**

6 EVENINGS
6 TOPICS
6 OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE

DEMOGRAPHICS | MIXED USE | HOUSING | MOBILITY | REDEVELOPMENT

JOIN US FOR A SPEAKER SERIES ON IMPORTANT LAND USE TOPICS AND
PROVIDE YOUR INPUT ON THE CITY'S UPDATE TO THE LAND USE PLAN.

Jan. 15	- A Changing City: Demographics and the Marketplace
Jan. 29	- Attracting Employers to Sugar Land
Feb. 12	- Town Square and Beyond: Creating Places for the Community
Feb. 26	- Housing Choices for a Successful City
Mar. 20	- Mobility and Land Use
Apr. 3	- Sustaining Vibrant Communities Through Redevelopment

For more information, please visit www.sugarlandtx.gov/landuseplan, or
contact us at longrangeplanning@sugarlandtx.gov or 281-275-2218.

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Forum Topics, Speakers and Key Takeaways

The topics and speakers identified to be a part of the forum series were a result of the significant discussion points during the stakeholder meetings. The forums topics and speakers were as follows:

<i>Forum 1 – A Changing City: Demographics and the Marketplace</i>	Dr. Stephen Klineberg, Professor of Sociology, Rice University and Director of Kinder Institute for Urban Research Mitchell Silver, Director of Planning, City of Raleigh, NC and Immediate Past President of the American Planning Association
<i>Forum 2 – Attracting Employers to Sugar land</i>	Don Janssen, Executive Vice President, Planned Community Developers, Ltd. Regina Morales, Director of Economic Development, City of Sugar Land Les Newton, President, Planned Community Developers, Ltd. Christof Spieler, Vice President and Director of Planning, Morris Architects
<i>Forum 3 – Town Square and Beyond: Creating Places for the Community</i>	Robert Tullis, Vice President and Director of Design, GID Development Robert Gibbs, President, Gibbs Planning Group – Urban Economic and Planning Consultants Director, Urban Retail Institute
<i>Forum 4 – Housing Choices for a Successful City</i>	Julie Campoli, Urban Designer and Author, Terra Firma Urban Design Keith D. Simon, Executive Vice President and Director of Development, CDC Houston, Inc. Steven R. Spillette, President, CDS Market Research
<i>Forum 5 – Mobility and Land Use</i>	Geoff Carleton, AICP – Principal, Traffic Engineers, Inc (TEI) Jeremy Nelson, Senior Planner and Development Advisor
<i>Forum 6 – Sustaining Vibrant Communities through Redevelopment</i>	Ellen Dunham-Jones, Professor of Architecture and Urban Design and Master of Science in Urban Design Coordinator, Georgia Institute of Technology

Titles and companies listed for each speaker is at time of the presentations

Forum Participant Feedback

After hearing the speakers, the residents in attendance divided up into smaller groups, facilitated by city staff and consultant team members, to discuss their takeaways from the forum presentations. Each session also had a group activity related to the topic so that participants could reflect on what they learned from the speakers and consider how it could apply to Sugar Land. The feedback from the participants in the land use forum, combined with input from the LUAC members, shaped the Vision and Goals of this Plan. The following is a summary of the feedback and discussion by the participants in the group activities that followed the forum speakers.

Discussions revealed that residents love Sugar Land and don't desire to see a great amount of change in the City but also recognize there is a need to address long-term challenges. However, participants also understood the changing demographics and

preferences of the community, and the benefits of looking ahead to prepare for the Sugar Land of the future. They appreciate the parks and open space, the residential character of the City, high quality services, and the local amenities. Residents gained an understanding of how land use influences mobility, housing choices, City finances, and the mix of uses in the City. In order to address these changes, residents suggested that the City should allow for additional mixed use activity centers to be developed in specific locations, increase housing diversity in the City, and expand transportation choices, all while maintaining a vibrant local economy. Participants also expressed an understanding of the trade-offs in making land use decisions because change is inevitable – a City cannot stay the same, but rather it either grows and improves, or fades and declines. The choice is not whether or not to change, but rather how to change for the better.

Below are some of the key takeaways identified by the participants during the group activities throughout the six-part forum series.

Mixed Use Activity Centers

Though there was some hesitation with regards to denser activity centers, it was apparent to most residents that creating areas with mixed land uses would address several issues facing the city.

- Mixed use centers benefit the City by attracting employers because they offer amenities such as restaurants, entertainment, and hotels nearby.
- There could be a range of different activity centers with different mixes of uses, including smaller neighborhood centers as well as larger regional centers, which could be created through redevelopment of existing retail and office areas.
- Some important design elements that were identified included adding green space and parks, taking advantage of existing lakes and drainage easements, taller buildings than are typical today, and inserting new streets. They also included locating buildings up close to the street to create a “main street” feel, rather than being placed behind large parking lots. Parking would be located on-street, behind buildings, or even in underground parking garages.
- Mixed uses within these activity centers could include residential, retail, business incubators, educational space, child care, senior centers, community centers, and a farmers’ market.

Expanded Housing Options

Participants identified a need to expand housing choices within the City to respond to changing demographics and market preferences. Though the desire is to remain predominantly single-family, residents recognized the benefit to having a variety of housing options.

- Smaller single-family housing options, such as townhomes or urban homes, offer opportunities for people to downsize and stay in the community. This style could be appropriate as infill within existing neighborhoods.
- Though multistory multi-family buildings were not seen as appropriate within single-family neighborhoods, it could be appropriate in mixed use areas at the edge of existing neighborhoods.
- One way to provide additional housing options would be to introduce compact forms of single-family in aging neighborhoods through redevelopment.

Mobility

Residents identified mobility as an important issue facing the City and acknowledged that land use and style of development impacts mobility. Though residents recognized that the primary means of transportation in the City is and will continue be the car, they also recognized the benefits to introducing additional transportation options in the City and how development form can be an impediment to doing so.

- The traditional way of measuring success in transportation is no longer appropriate because congestion is an indicator of success not failure, and continuing to expand vehicular capacity does not solve mobility issues in the long-term.
- People are increasingly looking for alternative ways to get around the City and the region other than by car. As generations age, they lose their ability to drive. Additionally, young professionals have a lower tolerance for commutes than previous generations and are therefore seeking shorter commutes and alternative modes of transportation. Some alternative mode options include improved pedestrian connectivity, expanded bicycle infrastructure, and even the introduction of limited transit.
- Residents expressed a desire to see improved walkability to daily activities such as cafes, coffee shops, and schools, as well as employment and activity centers.
- Additional transit opportunities, such as connecting activity centers to one another, should be investigated.
- Land uses should be developed in order to be able to take advantage of alternative modes of transportation, such as orienting buildings towards the street, creating wide pedestrian corridors, and enhancing connections between land uses.

Fiscal Impact of Land Use

- Residents recognized the impact that land use has on the viability of the City's fiscal health. Denser development within mixed use areas provides a stronger tax base than does a sprawling retail strip center. Office uses bring a wide range of benefits as do light industrial uses.
- Residents recognized how the City's commercial tax base funds services, and without it, residents would have to pay for the full burden of those services that is currently subsidized by non-residential uses.
- Residents commented that the limitations on employment in Sugar Land may be based on the limited availability of land, rather than market demand. Thus, it is critical to reserve land for light industrial usage, as well as continue to encourage other commercial and office development in the City.

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Public Meetings and Online Town Halls

Another way the public was able to provide feedback on the Land Use Plan was through public meetings and online town halls. In all, there were two open house-style meetings and three online town halls to receive input from the general public.

Online Town Hall #1: The City started the public process with an online town hall, which was open from mid-May 2013 through end of June 2013. The town hall asked citizens “Imagine Sugar Land 25 years from now. What aspects of the City’s land use would you like to remain the same, and what aspects would you like to see change?” Citizen responses ranged from suggesting additional cultural attractions to proposing pedestrian connectivity across U.S. Highway 59 at the State Highway 6 and U.S. Highway 59 intersection. These responses helped formulate the draft vision statement presented for public feedback at subsequent public meetings.

Public Meeting #1 & Online Town Hall #2: The first public meeting was held on December 3, 2014, and the primary focus of the meeting was to receive feedback on a draft vision statement and set of goals and to help identify ideas for strategies to achieve the proposed vision and goals.

The citizens that attended the meeting generally supported the draft vision and goals. One resident commented that the vision appeared to take a balanced approach, while another mentioned that it sets the stage for a livable, growth oriented, family friendly Sugar Land. Residents were asked to identify their top five goals, and the following were identified as the most important:



Activity Centers



Single Family Neighborhoods



Residential Options



Celebrate Sugar Land



Great Place for Business

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Participants also provided ideas for strategies that could be utilized to implement the goals. Some of the common themes that arose from these ideas included:

- Providing housing options attracts diversity and allows a variety of people to live in Sugar Land, from singles to retirees and from families with young children to empty nesters.
- No large garden style apartment complexes should be allowed. Any new apartments should only be allowed within walkable areas that also include commercial uses.
- Older Sugar Land neighborhoods, such as The Hill and Brooks Street, should be preserved, and new development around these areas should utilize a variety of features and elements to complement the older areas.
- Additional small lot single-family homes should be established in the community to attract young families and those that wish to downsize. These should be located close to amenities and services and be connected with greenbelts.
- A transit circulator, connecting activity centers throughout the City, would be beneficial.
- Single-family neighborhoods are at the heart of Sugar Land, and preserving them through active code enforcement and infrastructure maintenance is important.
- The Sugar Land Regional Airport is an important asset to the City that should be protected and enhanced.
- Sugar Land can celebrate its character, history and diversity through additional community events, public art, and community engagement in the city government.

After the public meeting, the City hosted an online town hall which provided additional opportunities for residents to provide feedback on the Plan. During the subsequent online town hall, residents expressed a desire for continued emphasis on parks and green spaces throughout the City. Some also expressed concern for future development of new apartments in the City.

The LUAC revised the goals based on the feedback from the meeting and online town hall. They used the feedback on strategies to draft a set of land use policies and action items for future implementation of the Plan by the City.

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Public Meeting #2 & Online Town Hall #3: A second public meeting was held on September 2, 2015, and the primary purpose of the meeting and subsequent Online Town Hall was to give participants the opportunity to review and provide feedback on the draft policies and action items, and to identify additional items that may have been missed.

The public meeting occurred after the presentation of a proposal for a mixed use development in the Tract 5 area that included new multi-family units. As a result, nearly 100 citizens attended the public meeting, most of whom live near the Tract 5 site. These residents provided feedback on the Plan, though most of it was focused on the desire to limit multi-family within the area. In addition to the significant focus on multi-family by some attendees, participants provided a range of feedback on the policies and action items. A number of common themes emerged from the various forms of feedback:

- The community agrees that Sugar Land is a great place for business that provides good service and has great amenities. The City should remain economically viable with job opportunities and strong tax base. In order to remain financially sound, the city should ensure all new infrastructure is built to last long term and consider availability and use of natural (local) resources, such as water supplies, in approving new development.
- The community is protective of single family neighborhoods and supports the creation of proactive programs to prevent decline of single family areas and to ensure new non-residential and residential developments are compatible with adjacent single-family homes. The community also agrees that retaining the “green feel” of residential areas and preserving the character of older neighborhoods are high priorities.
- The City needs to maintain its sense of community and community pride with good multi-use development (including offices in activity centers) that has walkability and sustainable use. Density should be encouraged near major retail, cultural arts and other attractions and entertainment but away from established residential areas in order to maintain their high home values and residential quality of life.
- The community has become very concerned with the impacts of additional multifamily residential on home values, schools, mobility and potential increase in crime. Of the 188 responses received from the Online Town Hall, 81% stated opposition to multifamily, high density apartments. Said responses did not answer the Online Town Hall question regarding the draft land use plan policies; instead they addressed concerns with a development application the City received proposing to build 900 apartment units. Nevertheless, there is clear concern about impacts of future multi-family residential development in the city.
- The community places a high value on education and has great pride in its schools. Due to the perceived correlation between multifamily residential and school population, there was overwhelming support for the need to explore opportunities to increase coordination between the City, Fort Bend Independent School District (FBISD) and the development community on future residential development. The Action Item board activity results showed that coordination between the City, FBISD and development community was the participants most important action item to achieve the land use vision and goals.
- Finally, participants agree that Sugar Land is a unique community of single family homes and desire to maintain that feel. Land along the Brazos River should be preserved for a regional greenbelt, and land should also be preserved specifically for light industrial use. The community is open to the right mix of uses in both Regional and Neighborhood Activity Centers including strategic ways to incorporate housing to attract recent graduates, younger families and the aging community. Sugar Land is a place that should be celebrated while protecting its single family neighborhoods.